

# ECOWAS Programmes and Priority for Emergency Response and Disaster Risk Reduction

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# Background

- ECOWAS is a regional group of 15 West African countries.
- Founded on May 28, 1975 with signing of the treaty of Lagos.
- Its mission is to promote regional economic and socio-political integration.
- The ECOWAS Commission drives its effort to enhance sustainable development under the premise of peace and security within the sub region

# Emergency/Disaster Context – West Africa

- In general terms, the West Africa region has been characterised particularly by trans-border conflict, civil wars, economic stagnation as well as both social and political insecurity.
- Mostly the region is prone to natural disasters resulting from, meteorological and hydrological hazards such as: (i) droughts; (ii) floods; (iii) cyclones; (iv) coastal hazards; (v) desertification and bush fire which in turn lead to starvation and outbreaks of disease.
- These factors often results in population displacements, refugee movements and major social, economic, environmental threats.
- Apart from the toll in human lives and the psychological trauma suffered by the populations, these problems tend to destabilise governments, weaken economies and destroy basic infrastructure.
- These often resulted in high vulnerability of the West African peoples to socio-economic loses and further slow down the process towards sustainable development and the ability to achieve the MDGs

# Legal Framework/Mandates of ECOWAS

- Article 2 (d) and 3 (f) of the ECOWAS Protocol for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security of December 1999, laid down the principles and mandated the development of effective policies that will help alleviate the suffering of the population and restore life to normalcy after complex humanitarian emergency and disasters.
- Articles 4, 56, 58, 59, 60, 61 and 63 of the ECOWAS Revised Treaty articulates measures for social justice, human security, civil protection, a peaceful environment as well as stability in the region as prerequisites for economic development
- Regulation MSC/reg.2/01/08 of 16 January 2008 relating to the establishment of ECOWAS Emergency Response Team (EERT) as a mechanism for humanitarian response in ECOWAS Member States adopted by the Council of Ministers at Ouagadougou Burkina Faso.

# ECOWAS Disaster Risk Reduction Division

- Over the years, the ECOWAS Commission has increasingly focused its attention on natural and man-made disaster issues.
- Consequently, the ECOWAS Policy for DRR was developed and adopted by the Authority of Heads of State and Government at the 31<sup>st</sup> Ordinary Summit in Ouagadougou on January 19 2007.
- This resulted in the establishment of a Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Division within the Department of Humanitarian and Social Affairs in 2008.
- Added to this, the DRR Division through the ECOWAS Member States and National Platforms will act as a catalyst for sub regional cooperation by facilitating and supporting Member States and National Coordinating mechanisms and capacity development with respect to disaster risk reduction and the implementation of the ECOWAS Policy on DRR.
- An ECOWAS Inter-Departmental Coordinating Committee (ICC) was also inaugurated by the President of the Commission on September 16<sup>th</sup> 2008 to enhance the work of the Disaster Risk Reduction Division to prevent, mitigate and respond to natural disasters.
- In order to strengthen the Inter-Departmental Coordinating Committee, an ECOWAS Working Group was also inaugurated on March 18<sup>th</sup> 2009.
- An ECOWAS Plan of Action for the policy implementation has been developed (draft stage)

# ECOWAS Emergency Response Team Unit

- The ECOWAS Emergency Response Team (EERT) mechanism was formally established by the ECOWAS Mediation and Security Council in January 2008.
- The EERT is a tool for achieving ECOWAS objectives in the area of delivery and coordination of humanitarian response in the sub region.
- It is a tool designed for humanitarian assistance to victims of humanitarian emergencies before the arrival of robust and durable assistance.
- It is conceptualised to be made up of ECOWAS citizens (men and women) with varied background, trained with skills to provide first line emergency response during crisis and assist victims of disasters return to normal life after crisis.

# ECOWAS Priority for Disaster Risk Reduction

- The ECOWAS DRR Policy and Plan of Action highlights a number of strategic priorities for the development of capacities for DRR in West Africa.
- In summary, the following priority areas have been highlighted by this document:
- Providing an Inter-Governmental framework for collaboration and partnership for ECOWAS Member States in disaster Risk Management.
- Promote integration of DRR into ECOWAS Member States National development Policies, Plans and Programmes.
- Facilitate the development and strengthening of institutional capacities for disaster forecasting, prevention, early warning, mitigation of effects and rebuilding for future risk reduction.
- Facilitate the establishment and strengthening of viable National Platforms
- Enhance the contribution of disaster risk reduction to peace and sustainable development of the sub region
- Development of a viable ECOWAS Inter-Departmental Coordinating Committee (ICC)

# ECOWAS Priority for Emergency Response

- The ECOWAS Emergency Response Team strategy has been designed to give guidance to ECOWAS in providing rapid humanitarian relief and response to Member States that have been affected by disasters of any kind. by engaging in emergency preparedness and response through training with the following priorities:
- Ensure improvement of EERT through the establishment of basic policies and procedures for effective preparedness and response operations.
- Ensure that EERT provides key support to Member states during response to emergencies and that resources for response meet the immediate needs of victims
- Ensure that member States have access to adequate information, counter measures, and strategies available to them for maximum protection of lives of the people, properties and environment from disasters
- Ensure that the EERT works with National Platforms of Member states emergency management agencies, organizations, stakeholders and NGOs including international institutions through actively engaging in these groups and developing positive working relationships, partnerships, collaboration and networking
- Ensure that Member States are prepared to effectively and adequately respond to emergencies through utilization of the EERT. This will be through coordinated training and simulation exercises and the implementation of lessons learned.

# Activities

- Increasing ECOWAS staff capacity in the field of planning, preparedness and managing emergencies and natural disasters.
- Increasing ECOWAS ability to provide quick responses to emergencies in Member States.
- Promoting training for EERT personnel in the region
- Facilitating the availability of response resources/equipment during emergency and natural disaster in the region
- Establishment of ECOWAS Humanitarian Depot (Mali)
- Developing effective communication system and network between ECOWAS and Focal Points of National Platforms within Member States, on preparedness and response to both natural and man-made disasters and complex emergencies.
- To support and fund efforts to equip National Focal Platforms and create a pool of Scientists (Future Groups), experienced emergency preparedness and response personnel.
- Collaborating with other partners (UN agencies, INGOs, NGOs, IFIs etc)

# Challenges

- Political will and funding constraint
- Transforming policies and guidance provided in the policy documents into regional actions by policy and decision makers, disaster managers.
- Assessment of regional country hazard risks, and development of vulnerability profile
- Comprehensive approach to mainstreaming disaster risk management into development strategies at national, sector and local levels
- Building institutional capacity and coordination mechanisms
- Strengthen disaster and emergency response capacities
- Information, knowledge management, multi-media communication on integrating DRM/climate risk management in sector operations

**END**

**Thank You !**